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The President's Daily Brief

June 2, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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LAOS

Anti-American sentiment resurfaced in Vientiane over the weekend.

Late Saturday, an estimated 50 to 60 Pathet Lao policemen and local teenagers gathered at the US Marine Guard residence to demand the arrest of one of the Marines. They alleged he had beaten a Lao youth earlier in the evening. The timely arrival of the US chargé, along with one of communist Deputy Prime Minister Phoumi Vongvichit's top aides, helped to defuse tensions and disperse the crowd.

The Marine in question has denied allegations of misconduct, explaining that the charges stemmed from efforts by himself and several colleagues to investigate a burglary at a nearby American residence.

Deputy Prime Minister Phoumi initially indicated that he wanted the Marine turned over to the city's joint police force for "une petite interrogation." Extensive discussions between Phoumi and the US chargé yesterday have brought cancellation of the police inquiry, and the Marine, by mutual agreement, will leave the country as soon as possible.

Phoumi also told the chargé that he has directed the joint police to ensure that no "embarrassing incidents" occur during Assistant Secretary Habib's official visit, which begins today. Despite Phoumi's assurances, anti-US demonstrations could occur during Habib's stay.

* * *

The Pathet Lao are continuing efforts to block the exodus of Meo tribesmen from northern Laos.

[redacted] Pathet Lao troops late last week fired on "several thousand" Meo who broke through police cordons at the town of Vang Vieng. After five tribesmen were killed and at least 20 wounded, the Meo decided to return to their villages.

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The Meo had been attempting to march from Vang Vieng southward along Route 13 to Vientiane, where they had planned to demand an audience with Souvanna. They [redacted] intended to lodge a protest with the Prime Minister over Pathet Lao activities in their

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home areas and to demand that General Vang Pao be permitted to return from exile in Thailand to resume active leadership of the Meo people.

Meanwhile, the regime in Bangkok has somewhat clarified its policy toward the growing numbers of Meo seeking refuge in northern Thailand. According to Secretary General of the Thai National Security Council Sitthi Sawetsila, who was aware that his remarks would reach US officials, Prime Minister Khukrit has agreed to resettle the bulk of Meo refugees who have already arrived in Thailand and who cannot safely return to Laos. The US, however, will be requested to pay for the resettlement.

At the same time, Khukrit and other senior Thai officials are said to be "extremely worried" over the possible influx of thousands of additional Meo. In their view, the flow of refugees can only be stopped by speeding up Vang Pao's departure from Thailand. They believe he acts "like a magnet" in drawing the Meo.

* * *

[redacted] Prime Minister Souvanna plans to turn over his nominal control of the coalition government and "go abroad." The date most frequently cited for the "turnover" is June 5.

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The timing fits [redacted] that Pathet Lao forces would "occupy" Vientiane on June 5 and that communist leader Souphanouvong--who has been in Sam Neua since the anti-rightist, anti-US campaign began more than a month ago--would also return to the Lao capital on that date. [redacted]

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[redacted] Lao Communist Central Committee leaders Kaysone Phomvihhan and Nouhak Phomsavan--not Souphanouvong--would enter Vientiane on June 5 as heads of the city's "liberation forces."

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Although Souvanna continues to voice optimism that recent events in Laos will somehow speed up realization of his long-cherished goal of national reconciliation, he is [redacted] deeply disturbed over the communist-orchestrated campaign of anti-American demonstrations and harassment. The Prime Minister has repeatedly tried to persuade his Pathet Lao deputy, Phoumi, to end the campaign.

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PORTUGAL

The agreement of the Socialists to end their boycott of cabinet meetings will ease political tensions in Lisbon. The solution appears to be temporary at best, however, and major differences remain unresolved.

An important factor in the Socialists' decision to back down from their challenge to the Movement was probably the military's promise to pressure Communist printers to accept the reopening of the Socialist newspaper Republica. Party leaders believe the paper will resume publication within a few days.

Military leaders also agreed to safeguard the activities of the constituent assembly--which opens today--removing last-minute doubts that the Movement would cancel or postpone an assembly dominated by moderate parties.

The Socialists believe there are several important areas of work for the assembly despite bounds set by the Armed Forces Movement. They plan to concentrate on human rights, justice, and municipal government--areas where policy has not been dictated by the Movement.

One of the Socialists' demands for continuing in the government was for new elections of municipal councils, many of which are now dominated by Communists. The assembly is empowered to set the dates for such elections, as well as for elections to the legislative assembly.

* * *

A "unitary action" rally was held last night to welcome Prime Minister Goncalves back from the Brussels NATO summit. The rally was part of the Movement's new policy of strengthening the relationship between the "people" and the military government and deemphasizing the political parties. A similar demonstration held last week was organized by the Communists, but the one last night was under the sponsorship of a "committee of democrats and antifascists with no party affiliations." One member of the committee is reportedly a close associate of Admiral Coutinho, who has advocated the creation of a parallel civilian movement to collaborate with the ruling Armed Forces Movement.

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LEBANON

The cabinet crisis shows no sign of ending soon.

Socialist leader Kamal Jumblatt is promoting what he calls a compromise under which representatives of his party and of the right-wing Phalanges Party would be excluded from the government. He wants the new cabinet to be composed of civilians who are neither members of parliament nor retired military officers.

Phalangist leader Pierre Jumayyil, predictably, has rejected any suggestion that his party be left out of the government. He has won valuable support from former president Shamun, who has declared that his National Liberal Party will not join any government that excludes the Phalangists.

Under ordinary circumstances, prime minister - designate Rashid Karami might be tempted to endorse Jumblatt's proposal, since it would create a weak cabinet that Karami could easily dominate. As a result of the continuing civil unrest, however, Karami almost certainly will continue to seek a solution that will have the backing of Jumayyil and Shamun; their withdrawal of support forced Prime Minister Rashid Sulh to resign last month.

Karami, counting on time to cool tempers and bring both sides to compromise, told newsmen on Saturday that he intends to take his time in forming a government. In the meantime, he is working closely with the outgoing military government to create buffer zones in Beirut between those areas controlled by the Phalangists and those controlled by the radical fedayeen.

Sporadic shooting continued in Beirut over the weekend, despite somewhat more aggressive patrolling by the joint Lebanese-Palestinian security units. Barricades remain in many parts of the city, and the main road from Beirut to the southern port city of Sidon was closed for several hours.

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PANAMA

The Torrijos government has placed tough restrictions on the media in an effort to stifle domestic critics.

The government is concerned over the impact recent criticism by certain student groups, business organizations, and communications media may have on canal treaty negotiations. For the past several years, prohibition of political activity has left the government largely free from criticism by organized groups. During the last month, however, elements of the business community who have never trusted Torrijos have aggressively attacked the government's economic policies.

Criticism by ultranationalist students is even more worrisome. Although they are only a small minority of the student population, these antigovernment students have effectively used demonstrations and radio broadcasts to attack the government's educational policies and treaty negotiation strategy. The government, not wanting to use open repression, apparently has decided to rely on pro-Torrijos students to silence such criticism. A group of high-school students, possibly acting on official instructions, recently seized an offending radio station, charging that it was a mouthpiece of "reactionary" businessmen and the CIA.

Torrijos fears that signs of disunity may be used by those who claim that his regime does not represent the Panamanian people. Government spokesmen are almost certain to become more forceful in their attacks on the opposition and to label the government's critics servants of foreign interests who want to sabotage the canal treaty negotiations and topple Torrijos.

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NOTES

A major conference of Cambodian communist officials is scheduled to begin in Phnom Penh on Thursday.

Intercepted messages disclose that civilian and military officials from all over the country are already on their way to the capital and that the conference will probably last three days. The national-level gathering will be the third this year. The first, in late February, resulted in some general domestic and foreign policy statements. The second, held in the chaotic days following the surrender of the Lon Nol government, announced that Prince Sihanouk would stay on as "head of state."

* * *

The USSR has declared an area in the northern Pacific closed to navigation between June 3 and June 30 because of "carrier rocket impacts."

The large size of the closure--130 nautical miles in radius--and the presence of many Soviet monitoring ships suggest that a MIRVed payload will be tested. The area is the same as that used in February and March 1974 for SS-X-17 and SS-18 firings and in October 1974 for SS-X-17 launches.

* * *

North Korean President Kim Il-song continues to tour African and East European capitals, but a Soviet official has said that Moscow is not on Kim's current itinerary.

Since May 22, Kim has been welcomed enthusiastically in Romania, Algeria, and Mauritania. He may visit Bulgaria and Yugoslavia before heading home. Kim's main objective has been to strengthen political support for North Korea in anticipation of the nonaligned conference this summer and the UN General Assembly's consideration of the Korea question this fall. Moscow will probably be willing to receive Kim at a later date when it judges the timing to be more opportune.

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